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ABSTRACT

In 1990, a survey was conducted by William Rainey Harper College (WRHC) to determine the continuing education needs of dietetic technicians in the Chicago area. The survey was mailed to 844 dietetic technicians, requesting information on their awareness of and interest in WRHC's continuing education offerings in their field. Major findings of the survey, based on a 7.8% response rate, included the following: (1) 62% of the 66 respondents were familiar with WRHC's offerings for dietetic technicians, 49% had participated previously in at least one continuing education offering, and 9% had participated in more than six offerings; (2) 50% of the respondents preferred the scheduling of all-day seminars on Friday, while the preferred time for 2- to 4-hour seminars was Saturday morning; (3) the four continuing education topics that at least 30 respondents stated they would most like to see offered at WRHC were laboratory tests and nutritional implications, geriatric nutrition, weight reduction and diets, and nutritional assessment/screening; (4) 71% of the respondents were employed full-time, 12% were employed part-time, and 17% were unemployed; (5) among employed respondents, 40% worked in hospitals, and 36.5% worked in long-term care facilities; (6) 85% indicated that the Commission on Dietetic Registration and the Dietary Manager's Association should be the sole agencies approving WRHC's dietetic technician courses; and (7) job responsibilities most frequently mentioned by respondents were charting care plans, planning and correcting menus, and managing dietary staff. The survey instrument, cover letter, data tables, and selected narrative responses are included. (JMC)

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CONTINUING EDUCATION NEEDS ASSESSMENT STUDY OF DIETARY TECHNICIANS

Volume XVIII, No. 3
August 30, 1989

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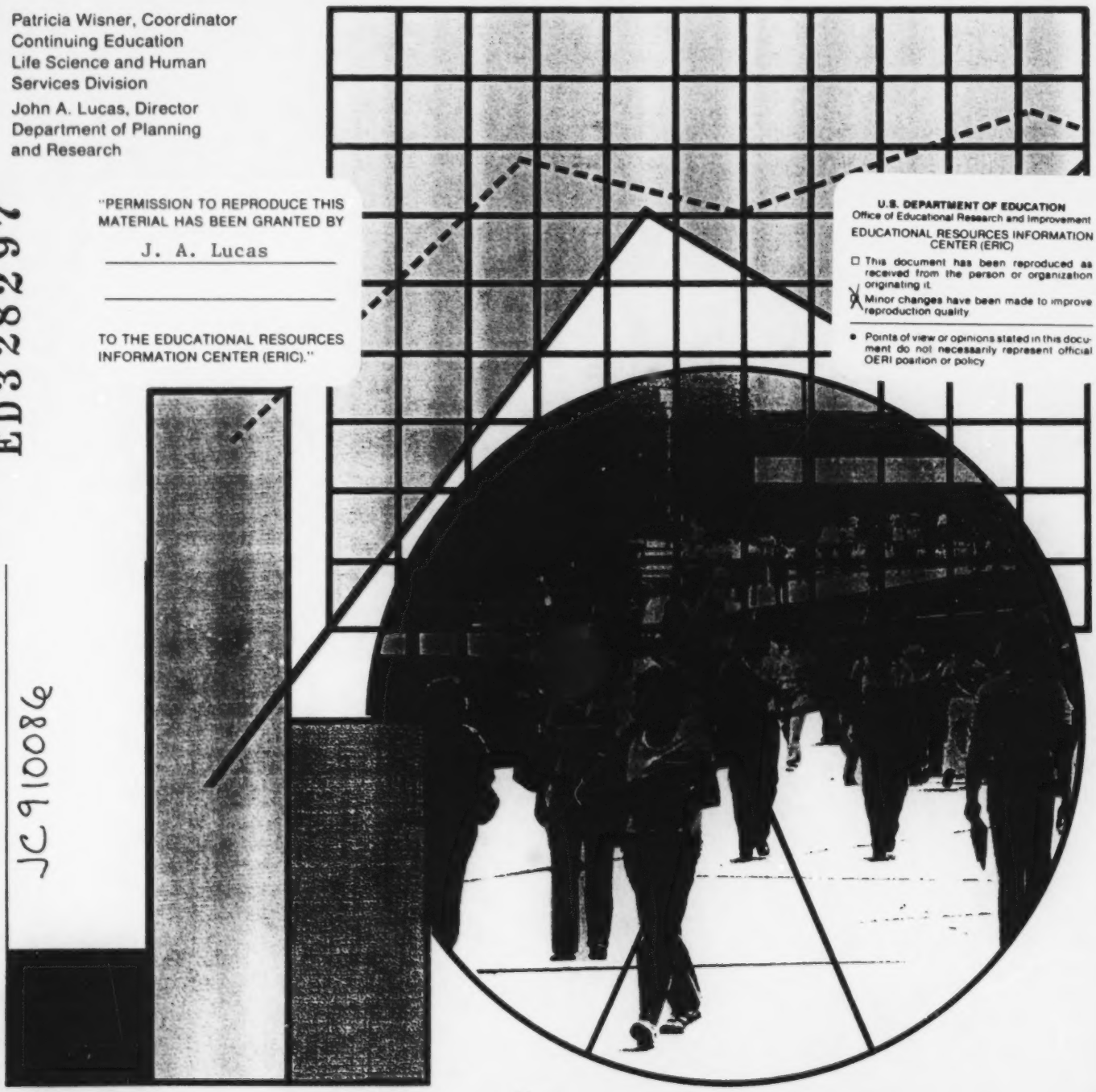

ABSTRACT

THE PURPOSE OF THIS SURVEY WAS TO DETERMINE THE CONTINUING EDUCATION NEEDS OF DIETETIC TECHNICIANS IN THE VICINITY. THE SURVEY FORM SHOWN IN THE APPENDIX WAS MAILED TO 844 DIETETIC TECHNICIANS LIVING THE CHICAGO AREA.

ALTHOUGH THE RESPONSE WAS LOW (7.8%) THE INFORMATION RECEIVED FROM THE 66 RESPONDENTS WAS USEFUL. THE BROCHURES DESIGNED SPECIFICALLY FOR CONTINUING EDUCATION OFFERINGS FOR DIETETIC TECHNICIANS ARE THE MOST EFFECTIVE MEANS OF MARKETING THE PROGRAM. FRIDAYS IS THE MOST POPULAR TIME FOR ALL DAY OFFERINGS WHILE SATURDAY MORNING IS MOST PREFERRED FOR 2-4 HOUR SEMINARS. THE FOUR MOST POPULAR TOPICS WERE LABORATORY TESTS AND NUTRITIONAL IMPLICATIONS, GERIATRIC NUTRITION, WEIGHT REDUCTION AND DIETS, AND NUTRITIONAL ASSESSMENT/SCREENING.

MORE THAN 80 PERCENT OF THE RESPONDENTS WERE NOW EMPLOYED IN THE FIELD AND MORE THAN THREE QUARTERS OF THOSE EMPLOYED WERE WORKING IN HOSPITALS OR LONG-TERM CARE FACILITIES. THE GEOGRAPHIC LOCATIONS OF RESIDENCES AND PLACES OF EMPLOYMENT OF THE RESPONDENTS WERE WIDELY SCATTERED IN THE CHICAGO AREA.

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Purpose

The purpose of this survey was to determine the continuing education needs of dietetic technicians in the Chicago area. The survey was requested by the Coordinator of Continuing Education Health Programs.

Methodology and Response Rate

The survey form shown in the appendix was developed by the Coordinator of Continuing Education Health Programs, Dietetic Technician Advisory Committee and the Office of Planning and Research. This survey form was mailed to 844 dietetic technicians in the Chicago area. Sixty-six completed surveys were returned for a response rate of 7.8 percent. Even though this appears to be a low response rate, it does not matter for this analysis, as all non-respondents are assumed to be not interested in the Harper program.

Discussion of Results

Among the respondents, 62 percent were familiar with the continuing education offerings for dietetic technicians but one must remember that the non-respondents outnumber the respondents more than 10 to 1 and presumedly the familiarity of the non-respondents would be very low. Almost all the respondents familiar with the program heard about it through the Continuing Education for Dietetic Technicians brochures and flyers mailed to their homes. About 49 percent of the respondents have already participated in at least one continuing education offering and 9 percent have participated in more than six offerings.

When asked what the preferred times for offerings were the most popular time for all day seminars was Friday, which was preferred by 50 percent of the respondents. Second preference was Saturday (45%) followed by Thursday (43.5%). The best time for a 2-4 hour seminar was Saturday morning (47%) followed by Tuesday evening (43.5%) and Monday evening (40%).

The four most popular topics nominated by at least 30 respondent were laboratory tests and nutritional implications, geriatric nutrition, weight reduction and diets, and nutritional assessment/screening. Another 14 topics were nominated by at least 20 respondents. Many comments were made about the various topics suggested and they are shown in the detailed results section.

The profile of the respondents indicates 71 percent are employed full time, 12 percent part time, and 17 percent not employed. Among those employed, 40 percent are working in hospitals while 36-1/2 percent are working in long-term care facilities. Sixty percent of the respondents are registered dietetic technicians. A total of 85 percent of the respondents thought Harper should not seek approval of their continuing education courses for dietetic technicians from any other group other than the Commission on Dietetic Registration and the Dietary Manager's Association. In terms of residence, a fourth of the respondents lived in the Harper District, 24 percent in surrounding suburbs, 22 percent in Chicago and 23 percent in other suburbs. In terms of employment location, 15 percent worked in the Harper District, 34 percent in surrounding suburbs, 23 percent in Chicago and 23 percent in other suburbs.

In terms of major job responsibilities, the most mentioned was charting care plans (24) followed by planning and correcting menus (21) and managing dietary staff (20).

Major Conclusions

Although the response was low (7.8 %) the information received from the 66 respondents was useful. The brochures designed specifically for continuing education offerings for dietetic technicians are the most effective means of marketing the program. Fridays is the most popular time for all day offerings while Saturday

Major Conclusions (continued)

morning is most preferred for 2-4 hour seminars. The four most popular topics were laboratory tests and nutritional implications, geriatric nutrition, weight reduction and diets, and nutritional assessment/screening. More than 80 percent of respondents were now employed in the field and more than three-quarters of those employed were working in hospitals or long-term care facilities. The geographic locations of residences and places of employment of the respondents were widely scattered in the Chicago area.

Detailed Results

	N	PCT
Total surveys mailed	844	
Responses received through mail	66	7.8
Unforwardable mail	18	2.1
No Diet Technician at address	1	.1
Returned blank form	2	.2
Number of surveys not returned	757	89.7
Responses received through mail	66	75.9
Unforwardable mail	18	20.7
No Diet Technician at address	1	1.1
Returned blank form	2	2.3
Total of above	87	100.0
Returned with change of address - Remailed with proper address	20	

Results of the sixty-six responses follow:

- Are you familiar with CE offerings for dietetic technicians at Harper?

	Total	Percent
Yes	41	62.1
No	25	37.9
Total response	66	100.0

- Where do you learn about continuing education offerings for dietetic technicians at Harper?

	Total	Percent
CE for dietetic technician brochures and flyers	35	61.4
Harper newspaper offering schedule	8	14.0
Employer/place of employment	7	12.3
Friend	4	7.0
Received no information	2	3.5
Telephoned to request information	1	1.8
Total responses	57	100.0

- **How many continuing education offerings for dietetic technicians at Harper College have you participated in over the past five years?**

	Total	Percent
One	5	7.6
2 - 3	9	13.6
4 - 6	12	18.2
Over 6	6	9.1
None	7	10.6
No response*	27	40.9

*consists of 2 responding "Yes" to being familiar with CE offerings

- **What is a good day for you to attend a one-day CE offering at Harper?**

	Total	Percent
Sunday	5	8.1
Monday	26	41.9
Tuesday	25	40.3
Wednesday	24	38.7
Thursday	27	43.5
Friday	31	50.0
Saturday	28	45.2

Total Responses - 62

- **What is a good day and time for you to attend a 2-4 hour continuing education offering at Harper College?**

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning	11	10	12	13	14	29
Afternoon	12	13	15	15	14	16
Evening	25	27	21	23	19	7

Total Responses - 62

Percentage against total responses:

Morning	17.7	16.1	19.4	21.0	22.6	46.8
Afternoon	19.4	21.0	24.2	24.1	22.6	25.8
Evening	40.3	43.5	33.9	37.1	30.6	11.3

- **Topics you would like see offered (by popularity)**

	Total		Total
Laboratory tests and nutritional implications	32	Gastrointestinal disease nutrition	20
Geriatric nutrition	31	Renal disease	20
Weight reduction diets	30	Hyperalimentation	18
Nutritional Assessment/screening	30	Food service management	18
Diet counseling	28	Dietary fiber	18
Nutrient/drug interaction	27	Communication skills	17
Diabetic nutrition	27	Food fads/fallacies/quackery	16
Cancer and nutrition	27	Sports nutrition	15
Career advancement	27	Leadership skills	15
Tube feedings/supplements	27	Nutrition labeling	14
Cardiovascular nutrition	25	Review for certification	14
Computer use	25	Cultural food patterns	11
Eating disorders	24	Time management	11
Stress management	23	Maternal/infant nutrition	11
Refresher course	21	Food packaging	7
Menu planning	21		

- **What is your dietetic technician employment status?**

	Total	Percent
Full time	46	70.8
Part time	8	12.3
Not employed	11	16.9
Total response	65	100.0

- **What is your place of employment?**

Hospital	22	40.0
Long-term care	20	36.4
Public health	2	3.6
Food industry	3	5.5
Clinic/H.M.O.	0	.0
School	2	3.6
Other*	6	10.9

*Nursing home, child care food program/government agency, home for retarded, D.D. facility, life care

- **Summary of major job responsibilities**

	N
Charting care plan	24
Planning/correcting menus	21
Managing dietary staff	20
Diet instruction	14
Food ordering/purchasing	13
Patient assessments	9
Screening for nutritional risks	7
Diet counseling	6
Schedule staff	6
Diet clerk	3
Assist with patient care	3
Calorie counts	3

- **Are you currently a registered dietetic technician?**

	Total	Percent
Yes	37	59.7
No	25	40.3
Total response	62	100.0

- **Programs are currently approved by the Commission on Dietetic Registration and the Dietary Manager's Association. Should we seek approval from any other organization?**

Yes	6	15.0*
No	34	85.0
Total response	40	100.0

* ASFA, American School Food Association, American Dietetic Association

- **Suggestions for speakers:**
  Susan Praw, Diary Council, Geriatric Nutrition
  National Dairy Counsel, Rosemont, Illinois
  ADA and Diabetic Counsel, Chicago, Illinois
  Chris Long and Kathie Johnson - Contact Cynthia Chow and Associates
  Leadership skills
  Diana Wilson, R.D., Bethany Terrace - to understand a food service worker.

City of Residence	N		N
Chicago	14	Barrington	1
Arlington Heights	5	Elmhurst	1
Hanover Park	3	Naperville	1
Niles	3	Itasca	1
Palatine	2	Westmont	1
Mt. Prospect	2	Evanston	1
Justice	2	Hoffman Estates	1
Schaumburg	2	Midlothian	1
Park Ridge	2	LaGrange	1
Rolling Meadows	2	Lisle	1
West Chicago	1	Crystal Lake	1
Round Lake	1	Libertyville	1
Carpentersville	1	St. Charles	1
Skokie	1	Wauconda	1
McHenry	1	Glendale Heights	1
Des Plaines	1	Westchester	1
Elmwood Park	1		

Out of State - 4	Wisconsin	2
	Iowa	1
	Massachusetts	1

Summary	N	Percent
Harper District	16	25.0
Surrounding suburbs	15	23.4
Chicago	14	21.9
Other suburbs	15	23.4
Out of State	4	6.3
Total	64	100.0

City of Employment	N		N
Chicago	12	Great Lakes	1
Glenview	4	Melrose Park	1
Des Plaines	3	Regency, North Carolina	1
Arlington Heights	3	Oak Park	1
Palatine	2	Lombard	1
Park Ridge	2	Hinsdale	1
Morton Grove	2	Dolton	1
Niles	2	Evanston	1
Onawa, Iowa	1	Tinley Park	1
Milwaukee, Wisconsin	1	Northbrook	1
Evergreen Park	1	LaGrange Park	1
Downers Grove	1	Winfield	1
Palos Hills	1	Buffalo Grove	1
St. Charles	1	Skokie	1
Rolling Meadows	1	Schaumburg	1
Maywood	1		

Summary of Location of Employment - Proximity to Harper	N	PCT
Harper District	8	15.1
Surrounding suburbs	18	34.0
Chicago	12	22.6
Other suburbs	12	22.6
Out-of-State	3	5.7
Total	53	100.0

What are your major job responsibilities?

- Testing food quality and characteristics through sensory perception - computerizing information - basic supervisory skills - report writing for some projects
- Counseling cardiac patients - CAD class - checking menus - nutritional assessments
- Screens new patients medical record, writes and checks menu for accuracy, processes all tube feeding and supplement charges
- Obtain diet information, food preferences, help patient select appropriate therapeutic menu items, etc.
- Screening for nutritional risk, diet histories, calculating calorie counts, menu checking, meal rounds, monitoring tolerance to meals and supplements
- Supervising food service employees, planning menus, charting on residents nutrition status, teaching nutrition classes.
- Director of food service supervisor - ordering, purchasing, menus, and charting.
- Sanitation, cooking, food purchasing and ordering, monthly consultation with the dietitian about residents diets.
- Food and nutrition theory taught to person over 18 years of age and all income and education levels - particular stress on children nutrition, i.e., food prep menu planning
- Resident charting, care plans, purchasing, employee scheduling
- Food service supervisor and dietary manager
- Patient service and cafeteria supervisor and editing menus
- Menu editing, calculation of tube feeding, chart reading, calorie count, patient visitation
- Charting

Any additional comments/suggestions

- Wish there were meetings for diet techs like DMA has monthly for its members and if there are that techs are made aware of them.
- New RDA's coming out and lab implications for geriatric patients and/or with new ADA 1986 exchange lists
- Have enjoyed the courses I attended and plan to attend more in the future
- I am filling this out to help you with your numbers - am 500 miles away, so some of the questions just do not apply.
- Harper is probably too far for me.
- I would like to find out more about becoming a registered dietetic technician - could you send requirements?
- The diet tech program needs to offer night classes
- More continuing education should be offered at least 6 to 8 times a year
- I am a certified dietary manager - have taken 3 courses totaling 180 hours. Also am a member of the DMA. I have an Illinois Sanitation certificate.
- Would love for ADA to include us in articles that are pertinent to DTR in the Journal and include us in newsletters.
- I do continuing education - need more workshops concerning lipids, omega oil, etc. Cardiac disease is our No. 1 cause of death
- Would like to receive CE credits by mail.

Comments about individual topics offered

The following are the individual comments to each topic that the dietetic technicians responded they would like to see offered:

Cancer and Nutrition
- How to decrease anorexia
- Newest research and ideas on treating patient
- Update information
- Controlling weight loss
- Terminal care and treatment

Comments about individual topics offered (continued)

Career Advancement
- Ways to get ahead
- Opportunities available/options
- Work other than nursing homes and hospitals
- Updating on field topics and changes
- What is the highest position a diet technician can hold
- Salary ranges for registered diet techs and how to ask for more

Cardiovascular Nutrition
- Latest information on affect of NA
- Newest research and better ways to instruct resident on diet
- Importance of following a cardiac diet
- Anything new and updated info/exercise/nutrition/fads
- Post operative nutrition
- Latest aspects in omega oils and monounsaturates

Communication Skills
- For CDD class

Computer Use
- Computers used in our industry today
- Inventory control
- Program availability
- In nutrition and FS industry
- Starting a system
- Use of computers in a small facility
- Nutritional breakdowns of standardized recipe

Cultural Food Patterns
- In relation to DM exchanges
- To better understand various cultures
- Exchange lists for ethnic foods

Diabetic Nutrition
- Class teaching techniques
- Update
- Relationship of over eating to obesity and health hazards
- Good guidelines, update info
- Instructions - implications of nutrition
- Need help in diabetic training
- Meal planning

Diet Counseling
- Better ways of communicating diets
- Update
- One-on-one or group discussion
- Instructions - implications of nutrition
- Motivating clients

Dietary Fiber
- Basic review and latest findings on fibers
- Anything new and updated information
- Dietary fiber in relationship to cholesterol and cancer

Eating Disorders
- Really how to reach these people
- Everything
- Among the alcoholics and dieters
- Treatment plan for patients with eating disorders
- Anorexia - psychological affects

Food Fads/Fallacies/Quackery
- What is important in the industry today

Food Packaging
- New techniques

Food Service Management
- Motivation of employee, cost control, portion costs
- Pertaining to health care delinary systems

Comments about individual topics offered (continued)

Gastrointestinal Disease Nutrition
- Basic review of various gastric diseases
- Disease and nutritional treatment

Geriatric Nutrition
- Following modified diet requirements when cooking for one (convenience foods, restaurants, etc.)
- Newest techniques in dealing with geriatric patient
- How to encourage elderly persons to eat
- Any changes or new ideas on the subject
- Meal planning to provide adequate nutrients
- Entire topic
- Changes which occur in elderly which affects their eating habits - physically and socially

Hyperalimentation
- Basic guidelines/how to help assess for R.D.'s
- Supplements and usage.

Laboratory Tests and Nutritional Implications
- Basic review
- What tests imply/complications
- Addressing abnormal labs for geriatrics
- Lab reports and normal values for children and adolescents
- What each lab value represents

Leadership skills
- Basic review
- Performance based evaluations

Material/Infant Nutrition
- Determining appropriate calorie level

Menu Planning
- New ideas, recipes, cost
- Variety on the menu
- Anything
- Cardiac and diabetic patients
- Things to consider in planning menus for institutional use

Nutrient/Drug Interaction
- Basic review
- Appropriate dietary information to supply patients related to medication use
- How it affects diet/nutrition

Nutrition Labeling
- Updating

Nutritional Assessment/Screening
- Simple guidelines for small departments
- Basic review
- Incoherent persons
- What to look for
- Addressing abnormal labs for geriatrics
- Difference between NA's from nursing home and hospital patients
- More in detail about charting NA
- Who to assess/screen
- Specifically of the elderly

Refresher Course
- Very good idea - very important
- Review for dietetic tech registration exam

Renal Disease Nutrition
- Dialysis and renal functions
- Need help in renal dials

Comments about individual topics offered (continued)

Review for Certification - What to look for to pass the certification test

Sports Nutrition - It is up and coming, very interesting
- Concerning complex carbohydrate diets

Stress Management - In work place
- Coping with everyday stress relating about work
- How it affects our cholesterol and other heart factors

Time Management - No responses

Tube feedings/supplements - Update
- The best route of tube feeding
- Assessment needs, rate control
- Who receives it and how to assess the patient
- Why supplements are needed for health related problems

Weight Reduction Diets - Child obesity
- Update
- Especially the important of exercise

APPENDIX

- Cover Letter
- Survey Instrument

William Rainey Harper College
Algonquin and Roselle Roads
Palatine, Illinois 60067
312-397-3000

Spring 1989

Dear Dietetic Technician:

The enclosed Needs Assessment Survey has been developed to assist the Life Science and Human Services Health Care Program at Harper College in planning for future continuing education offerings for dietetic technicians.

So we can effectively plan offerings in continuing education, we need information from dietetic technicians about their needs and interest in continuing education. By completing this survey you can make a significant contribution toward our effort in providing continuing education offerings that will best meet your needs and interests.

If you choose to participate in this survey, please return the completed survey, by May 1st, in the self-addressed envelope which is enclosed for your convenience.

Thank you very much for your consideration of this request, and if you have any questions about continuing education at Harper College, feel free to write or telephone 397-3000, extension 2687.

Sincerely,

Patricia A. Wisner

Patricia A. Wisner, Coordinator
Continuing Education
Life Science and
Human Services Division

PAW:jc
Enclosures

WILLIAM RAINEY HARPER COLLEGE
CONTINUING EDUCATION
LIFE SCIENCE AND HUMAN SERVICES DIVISION

Needs Assessment Survey - Dietetic Technician

Please check (✓) and/or fill in the appropriate responses for each question.

1- Are you familiar with Continuing Education offerings for Dietetic Technicians at Harper College?

_____ A. Yes
_____ B. No (If NO, skip to No. 4)

2- Where do you learn about Continuing Education offerings for Dietetic Technicians at Harper?

_____ A. Harper newspaper offering schedule
_____ B. Continuing Education for Dietetic Technicians brochures and flyers
_____ C. Friend
_____ D. Employer/Place of employment
_____ E. Telephone to request information
_____ F. Other (specify)_____

_____

3- How many Continuing Education offerings for Dietetic Technicians at Harper have you participated in over the past five (5) years?

_____ A. 1
_____ B. 2 - 3
_____ C. 4 - 6
_____ D. Over 6
_____ E. None (state reason) _____
_____

4- What is a good day for you to attend a one-day Continuing Education offering at Harper? Check (✓) all that apply.

_____ A. Sunday
_____ B. Monday
_____ C. Tuesday
_____ D. Wednesday
_____ E. Thursday
_____ F. Friday
_____ G. Saturday

5. What is a good day and time for you to attend a 2-4 hour Continuing Education offering at Harper? Check (✓) all that apply.

	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
Morning	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Afternoon	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____
Evening	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

6. First, please check (√) those topics you would like to see offered.
Second, on the line below indicate the specific items you would like to see covered about that topic.

_____ A. Cancer and Nutrition

_____ B. Career Advancement

_____ C. Cardiovascular Nutrition

_____ D. Communication Skills

_____ E. Computer Use

_____ F. Cultural Food Patterns

_____ G. Diabetic Nutrition

_____ H. Diet Counseling

_____ I. Dietary Fiber

_____ J. Eating Disorders

_____ K. Food Fads/Fallacies/Quackery

_____ L. Food Packaging

_____ M. Food Service Management

_____ N. Gastrointestinal Disease Nutrition

_____ O. Geriatric Nutrition

_____ P. Hyperalimentation

_____ Q. Laboratory Tests and Nutritional Implications

_____ R. Leadership Skills

_____ S. Maternal/Infant Nutrition

_____ T. Menu Planning

_____ U. Nutrient/Drug Interaction

_____ V. Nutrition Labeling

_____ W. Nutritional Assessment/Screening

_____ X. Refresher Course

_____ Y. Renal Disease Nutrition

_____ Z. Review for Certification

_____ AA. Sports Nutrition

_____ BB. Stress Management

_____ CC. Time Management

_____ DD. Tube Feedings/Supplements

_____ EE. Weight Reduction Diets

7- Please list any additional topics you would like to see offered.

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

8- Please answer the following statistical information.

A. City of residence_____

B. City of Dietetic Technician employment_____

C. What is your Dietetic Technician employment status?
_____ 1. Full Time
_____ 2. Part Time
_____ 3. Not employed (Skip to Item F)

D. What is your place of employment?
_____ 1. Hospital
_____ 2. Long-Term Care
_____ 3. Public Health
_____ 4. Food Industry
_____ 5. Clinic/H.M.O.
_____ 6. School
_____ 7. Other (specify)_____
_____

E. What are your major job responsibilities? _____
_____
_____

F. Are you currently a Registered Dietetic Technician? _____ Yes _____ No

G. Programs are currently approved by the Commission on Dietetic Registration and the Dietary Manager's Association. Should we seek approval from any other organization? _____ No _____ Yes (Please specify organization)
_____

H. Have you any suggestions for speakers? List name, telephone number, or place of employment and topic.

I. Any additional comments or suggestions.

THANK YOU FOR RESPONDING TO THIS SURVEY!

Operational Staff

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